THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE New Testament;

OR, A

SCOLASTIC DEFENCE OF THE *SCRIPTURE DOCTRINES* OF Redemption, Propitiation, &c.

From a Comparison of the *Original* Meaning of those Terms in the *Hebrew* of the OLD TESTAMENT and the *Greek* Version of the same, with their Use and Application in the Writings of the NEW TESTAMENT, *Against the* INFIDELS *and* LIBERTINES *of this Age.*

With a PREFACE, occasionally written in Vindication of the AUTHOR's conformity to the established Church, contrary to the Principles of his Education.

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THE PREFACE.

THE Prevalence of *Socinianism* in this Age and Nation, and particularly amongst the *Protestants* of that Denomination, who not Half a Century ago were prevalently the most zealous Assertors of the great Doctrines of REDEMPTION, PROPITIATION, SATISFACTION and SALVATION by *JESUS CHRIST*, as the only Ground of Hope for a sinful World, hath given a just Alarm to many Persons of Learning and Piety to appear in Vindication of those Doctrines, which have through all Ages of the Christian Church appeared to contain the Quintescence of the Christian Revelation, and that which most eminently distinguisheth CHRISTIANITY from all other Systems of Religion in the World, and which have always appeared to be indubitably established in the HOLY SCRIPTURES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

As, I am persuaded, some who have unhappily run into this NEW SCHEME OF CHRISTIANITY, which makes the Gospel little more than a System of refined Morality, and so sets it pretty much upon a Level with the

Writings of the *Pagan* Philosophers and Moralists, are not sufficiently acquainted with, or have not duly attended to the original and proper Import of some Terms in the Old Testament, used to explain the Nature and Efficacy of the sacrifical Rites of the *Mosaic* Religion, and thence transplanted into the New Testament, and applied to the Death and Sacrifice of *CHRIST*, as the great Propitiation for the Sins of Mankind; I thought it might be of some Service to elucidate and confirm the Christian Doctrine, if I could explain the natural Import of those Terms in the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets, and thence justify their Application in a more eminent Sense, to shew the Effects of the great Christian Sacrifice; as it will, I trust, hence be evident that it was the Design and Intention of the Spirit of God, in the Writings of the Holy Apostles and Evangelists, to communicate thereby the same Idea, to those of the Christian Religion, respecting the Effects of the Sacrifice of the Death of *CHRIST*, which the same Terms in the Old Testament did communicate to the *Israelite* and *Jewish* Nation, with Relation to the Sacrifices under the Law; and the same which Terms of the same Import and Signification, in other Languages, did give to the *Pagan* World, with respect to the Sacrifices they offered.

And it is a Pleasure to me to find, that some Gentlemen of great Learning, who have written in defence of the other Side of the Question, and endeavoured to expunge the Doctrines of *Redemption*, *Propitiation*, *Satisfaction*, &c. out of the Christian Scheme, yet seem persuaded that the only Way to adjust our Apprehensions upon this great and momentous Article of our holy Religion, is accurately to ascertain the Meaning and Application of those Terms, as used in Relation to the *Jewish* and other Sacrifices: And, particularly, the very learned Author of *The Scripture Doctrine of Atonement examined* hath professedly gone in this Way, only with this very great and essential Difference from the Course of Reasoning I have endeavour'd to prosecute; that he, as well

well as others of the ſame Way of Thinking, endeavours to ſhew that thoſe Terms are uſed, both in the Old Teſtament and the New, in a figurative and allegorical Senſe, which I contend are, by the ſoveraign Appointment of the Almighty, uſed in a Senſe the ſame with, or plainly anologous to that in which they were uſed with Relation to Affairs and Occurrencies frequently happening in human Life. And here I beg leave to acquaint my Reader, that the Book juſt mentioned did not come to my Knowledge till after I had printed off my ſecond Section, wherein the Remarks upon that learned Performance would properly have come in; ſo that I have been forced to reſume the Subject in the third Section, ſomething out of Order, to anſwer ſuch Things in that Work as I thought it neceſſary to obviate, for further Confirmation of the Argument I am endeavouring to ſupport.

SUPPOSING the Doctrine here aſſerted, in the Senſe it hath been generally received in the Chriſtian Church for more than ſeventeen Hundred Years, prove, upon impartial Examination, as I truſt it will, to be of the Eſſence of the Chriſtian Faith and Religion, it will, I think, be undeniable that if any one of the Character of a CHRISTIAN MINISTER, in explaining publicly the GOSPEL OF *CHRIST*, and ſhewing the Benefits accruing thence to Mankind, ſhall omit to mention this great Benefit of *Propitiation* and *Redemption*, he may be ſaid, in that Performance, not to have acted as becomes a MINISTER OF *CHRIST*, or not to be a true Chriſtian.

SUCH a Declaration as this gave immediate Occaſion to this Work; for having been informed that a certain neighbouring Miniſter had diſcovered, in free Converſation, a Diſlike to the Doctrine of *Redemption*, and a Perſuaſion of the Sufficiency of NATURAL RELIGION to recommend Mankind to the Divine Favour for eternal Felicity, I took an Occaſion to attend on his Public Service, that I might (at leaſt have a Hazard to) prove whether my Informant had not been too ſevere in his Repreſentation of the Gen-

tleman's Principles; when I had the Mortification to find the Account too true, and that his Public Discourse was suitable to the Account my Friend had given me of his private Conversation. And as the Subject he treated on naturally led him to discover his Sentiments on this Head, he did it in such a Manner as gave me sufficient Reason to declare, without reserve, *that he was not*, in my Opinion, *an Orthodox Christian*; whereof, as a Vindication was demanded, I thought it my Duty in this public Manner to justify my Assertion, and shew how inconsistent the Sermon I heard was to what has been almost universally received, in the Church of *CHRIST*, for the true Doctrine of the Gospel, as is before declared.

And as on this Occasion I have endeavoured, in the following Sheets, to prove the Doctrine of *Propitiation* and *Redemption* to be really essential to the Christianity of the New Testament, so I shall, in this Preface, take Occasion to justify my own Conduct, in conforming to the established Church; (for which I know I have been severely censured) by some brief Remarks on a very remarkable Passage in that Gentleman's Sermon; whereof I think it necessary, by Way of Introduction, to give such an Account as my Memory enables me to do; in which, tho' imperfect, I shall keep strictly to Truth, and relate the Affair with impartiality, and without all Prejudice.

After a short introductory Prayer, reading a Portion of Holy Writ, and singing a Part of a Psalm, the Gentleman addressed the Almighty in a very elegant and pretty long Prayer, previous to his Sermon; a Prayer in my Apprehension so truly elegant, proper and regular, with respect to Sense, Expression and Connection, as I apprehend very few (if any one Man alive) capable of composing and uttering *extempore*: But this I can say of it truly, that to the best of my Observation and Memory, except the meer Conclusion, the whole Prayer might have been composed and uttered by *David* or *Solomon*, by *Socrates* or *Plato*, or any other learned and

and devout *Jew* or *Pagan* of Antiquity, who believed the Unity of the Deity, before the Incarnation; or by any devout *Mahometan* at this Day; so perfectly void was the whole Composition, excepting as above, of any Thing peculiarly relating to the Christian Religion. The former Part of the Prayer contained a very elegant Declaration of the Divine Perfections of Being, Wisdom, *&c*: But in his Enlargement upon these glorious Attributes of God, he took no Notice of their Agency, in the great Work of the *Redemption* of the World by the Death of *CHRIST*. Particularly, in speaking of the Divine Wisdom, he never mentioned that *Wisdom of GOD in a Mystery which was ordained before the World, unto our Glory* in the Gospel of *CHRIST*: 1 Cor. 2. 7. *That Depth of the Riches of the Wisdom and Knowledge of GOD*, Rom. 11, 33, which is adored by the Angels in Heaven, and by the Church on Earth, as manifested in the Redemption of lost and fallen Mankind, by the Sacrifice and Death of the Son of God.

He enlarged no less elegantly in acknowledgment and Praises of the Mercy and Goodness of God to Mankind, in the Course of Nature and Providence; but not a Word, to my Remembrance or Observation, of the Goodness and Mercy of God in the Redemption of the World by our Lord *JESUS CHRIST*; even that *tender Mercy of our GOD, whereby the Day-Spring from on High hath visited us, to give the Knowledge of Salvation to his People*, by the Remission of their Sins: *Luke* 1. 77, 78. Not a Word of that Love of God, *which was in this manifested towards us, because that GOD sent his only-begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him.* John 5. 9. Rom. 5. 8, *&c*. Not a Word of that Holiness of God, which was discovered in requiring that his only-begotten Son should die as a Propitiation for the Sins of Mankind, before his Mercy could, consistently with the Wisdom and Rectitude of the Divine Government, shew itself in their Pardon and Salvation. In short, I know not that the Name of *CHRIST*

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was once mentioned in the whole Prayer, except it was (but I think it was not in this Prayer) that he made an Acknowledgment of the Mercy of God in sending *JESUS CHRIST* to make known to us *the true Religion of Nature.* But I rather think this was after the Sermon; otherwise I think the Name of *CHRIST* was not mentioned till the very Close, as I said before; and this Close I thought not of a Piece with the Rest of the Composition, as having a Pretence and Appearance of begging such Blessings, and making such acknowledgments of Mercies received from the Almighty THROUGH *JESUS CHRIST* OUR LORD, as implied *JESUS CHRIST* to stand in such a Relation between God and us, as he is indeed represented in Scripture to do, but such as had not been mentioned or hinted at before in the whole Prayer.

I had attended the Dissenters Worship for many Years after I became in some Measure capable of Reasoning and Reflection, but never before heard such a Prayer. But (not to dwell longer on this) when this was ended, the Minister addressed himself to his Sermon, and gave out such a Subject as I could have wished; *The Truth shall make you free.* In treating upon which he told us, that by Truth, in this Proposition, was meant the Gospel of *CHRIST*; and the Freedom this gave to Mankind was, to the best of my Remembrance, declared to consist in these four Particulars:

FIRST. The Gospel, he said, freed Mankind from the Bondage and Slavery they were *generally* before under to their irregular Desires and depraved Passions, by setting forth the Excellency and Rewards of Virtue and Holiness. *Life and Immortality being* peculiarly *brought to Light by the Gospel*, &c.

THE second Particular, I think, was, that the Gospel freed Mankind from the Fears and Apprehensions they were before under, from the wavering and uncertain Opinions, touching a World to come, *&c.* Of this I have not so much Assurance as with Respect to the Rest. If I misrepresent, I ask the Gentleman's Pardon.

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THIRDLY, the Gospel, he told us, delivered us from the burthensome Rites of the *Mosaic* Institutions, *&c.* Under all these Heads the Gentleman, as I thought, spoke with a good deal of Force and Propriety both of Reason and Oratory: But not a Word of such Things as I had been wont to hear enlarged on from such-like Texts; nothing of being delivered by the Gospel Dispensation from the heinous Guilt of Sin; from the tremendous Wrath of God; from the tyrannical Dominion of our spiritual Enemies; and the dreadful Torments of eternal Perdition, originally threatned upon disobedience. What he said under these Heads was very true, but, I apprehend, not the whole Truth, but far short of the Extent of that Deliverance which the Gospel gives the Notice of to the Children of Men. But, to atone for this Defect, he told us in the

FOURTH Place, that the Gospel delivered us from all Subjection to the Ordinances and Decrees of Men, in Matters of Religion, or to this Effect. Under this Head the Orator seemed to exert the utmost of his Faculties; insomuch that he appeared to me to have had this Topic principally in View, when he determined to treat of the *Liberty wherewith* CHRIST *hath made us free*, Gal. 5. 1.

UNDER this Head the young Declaimer said a great deal to shew that neither Princes, nor Popes, nor Councils, nor Fathers, nor Bishops, nor Synods, nor Parliaments, nor all together, had the least Right authoritatively to prescribe in MATTERS OF RELIGION; and for himself, he said, he did in that public Manner PROTEST against all religious Prescription or Imposition whatsoever, except the Bible; or Words to that Effect. This I thought assuming too much of the Apostle for one of his Years; for his Appearance to me was, that of *a Youth ruddy and of a fair Countenance.* 1 Sam. 17. 42.

Now, as I took this to be the most important, and by much the most laboured Part of the Sermon, exprest with great Force of Oratory, but, in my Apprehension, not quite

equal Strength of Reasoning; having in my Book endeavoured to shew that the Doctrine of the Gospel of *CHRIST* is much more extensive than represented by his Sermon, and the Freedom which that Dispensation has bless'd Mankind with, is of a different Conception; I shall here beg leave briefly to enquire into the truth of this Proposition: *That no Power on Earth hath Right to prescribe in Matters relating to Religion, and the public Worship of GOD.* And I hope I shall, without much Pains, make the Proposition, considered in general, appear as false as this Gentleman seemed convinced he had proved it true. I say then,

In the first Place, No Power on Earth, since the ceasing of the immediate, supernatural, infallible Guidance of the Holy Spirit, hath authority to institute new Articles of Faith, new Sacraments or new Rules of general moral Practice, which can be obligatory upon the Christian Church. With respect to these, the Declaration of the Prophet in the Close of the Holy Bible, *Revel.* 22. 18, 19, may be applied: *If any Man shall add unto these Things, GOD shall add unto him the Plagues that are written in this Book; and if any Man shall take away from the Words of the Book of this Prophesy, GOD shall take away his Part out of the Book of Life and out of the holy City, and from the things which are written in this Book.*

I know not whether this particular Text have Relation to the whole Canon of the Scripture, or only to that Prophecy in particular. The learned Dr. *Hammond* seems to favour the former; and says, that as this was the last Book assuredly written by the inspiration of the most High (though there might be some Prophets after St *John*, as *Justin Martyr* says the Gift of Prophecy remained in the Church till his Time, which was the former Part of the second Century, and not long after the Date of this Book; yet) this Book should be the Last, and so the Close and Seal of all public Prophecies: But, I say, whether that be the Meaning of this Place or not, it is very certain that since the Finishing of the Canon of

of the Holy Scripture, no Man, nor any Set or Number of Men, can have Power to institute as abovesaid; and so said the blessed Apostle, *Gal.* 1. 8, 9, *For though we* (the inspired Apostles) *or* even *an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed*; which is, for the greater Energy, repeated in the following Verse; *What I said before, the same I say again: If any Man preach*, &c. So that if any one Man, or any Body of Men, shall assume to make any new Institution, as beforesaid, as of universal Obligation upon the Conscience, for which there is not a plain Declaration in Holy Scripture as a Foundation, such Person will be liable to the Malediction here denounced by the Holy Apostle and Prophet; and this I desire particularly to recommend to the serious Consideration of such as endeavour to pervert the plain Declarations of the New Testament, with respect to the Subjects treated on in this Book; as they may, I think, properly and very remarkably be said to *preach another Gospel, which we have not received.* Agreeable to this is what *Hugo Grotius* delivers upon this Subject in his Book *De Imperio summarum Potestatum circa Sacra*: "Non est humanæ potestatis nova condere fidei Capita, "neque novos Dei cultus aut nova instituere Sacramenta, *&c.*" i. e. *It is not lawful for human Authorities to make new Articles of Faith, or to institute a new Worship of* GOD, *or new Sacraments*, &c. Cap. 3. No. 11.

But although nothing essential may be added to the Christian Faith or Worship; yet,

Secondly, as besides these, it is necessary for answering the Ends of the Christian Institution that Churches, as Societies for the public Worship of God, and other Things of a public Nature relating to Religion, should be under some form of external Government, Administration, or Polity, and as THERE IS NO FORM GIVEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, OF DIVINE AUTHORITY AND UNIVERSAL OBLIGATION, as we shall see a little further on, it becomes absolutely necessary in the Nature of Things, that the Modes of ex-

ternal Adminiſtration be of human Inſtitution, ſo far as the Circumſtances of human Nature, and the Reaſon of Things, will permit.

The univerſal Church, like the whole World, is only under the immediate Direction of the Almighty; who alone by his univerſal ſuperintendence adminiſters, and alone can adminiſter, the Affairs of the whole World, as one great civil Society, and the Affairs of the Church univerſal, as one great religious Society; and it is plain from Speculation and Experience, that ſince the Diffuſion of the Goſpel over the various Empires, States and Kingdoms of the World, there never was, nor ever can be, amongſt Mankind, any one univerſal Head of the whole Church militant upon Earth, (notwithſtanding the vain Pretence of the Pope of *Rome* to this exalted Character) any more than there ever was or can be, ſince the Diſperſion of Mankind, one univerſal ſecular Soveraign over all the World, conſidered as one great civil Society. The Reaſon hereof is clear: Becauſe ſuch an univerſal Government Eccleſiaſtical is abſolutely inconſiſtent with that Diverſity of ſecular Governments and other different Circumſtances under which the different Parts of the Chriſtian Church is, and hath always been diſpoſed; yet each of theſe Parts, whether conſidered as National, Provincial, Dioceſan, or Parochial, or by what other Names ſoever *dignified or diſtinguiſhed*, ought to be under ſuch external Oeconomy, or political Adminiſtration, as is neceſſary to anſwer the Ends of the Chriſtian Inſtitution. But it is certain this eccleſiaſtical Adminiſtration cannot be Soveraign, and independent of the civil Government of every Country, for this one plain ſelf-evident Reaſon, That it is inconſiſtent with the Being and Deſign of human Societies, that is, with the Nature of Things, that there ſhould be two or more ſoveraign Authorities in one and the ſame Society; or, if you pleaſe, in two Societies conſiſting of the ſame Perſons: Becauſe the Laws of the different Soveraignties might eaſily ſo claſh and interfere as to render Obedience, Rewards and Puniſhments impracticable Οὐκ ἀγα-

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θὸν πολυκοιρανίη εἷς κοίρανος ἔςω. *Hom. Il.* 2. And so says our very learned *Selden* in the Preface to his Book *De Synedriis et prefecturis juridicis veterum Hebræorum*; wherehe compares this to the Supposition of two Suns in the Heavens, or more Souls than one in the same human Body. And *Hugo Grotius* in his Treatise *De Imperio*, &c. mentioned before, writes thus: "Effectus Imperij sunt obligatio et coactio, si autem plures "essent summi imperantes possent esse imperata, contraria "aut contrarietatem implicantia, &c." i. e. *The Effects of Government are obligation and coertion; but if there might be more than one Sovereign Government in the same Society, there might be Laws contradictory and inconsistent*, &c. The Inconsistency of two independent soveraign Governments (as ecclesiastical and civil) in one and the same Society is, beyond contradiction, proved in an unexceptionable Dissertation, by Way of Preface to a very obnoxious Book; I mean, *The Rights of the Christian Church.*

To this it may be objected, that the Christian Church did, for more than three Hundred Years, support a Government within it self, independent of the Civil Powers under which it was; which must in some Measure be allowed. But what Kind of Government was it? Why, either under the Favour and Connivance of moderate, good-natured Princes, and so under their Protection: Or else exposed to the severe Animadversions of those of a different Character; the Consequence whereof was, that for their constant Adherence to their own Laws, the Christians suffered those cruelties, as is related by Ecclesiastical Historians, which without the singular and extraordinary Interposition of the Almighty, in support of his own Cause (whereby *the Blood of the Martyrs became the Seed of the Church)* would have totally destroyed them. And this is it self a strong Evidence of the Inconsistency of two distinct soveraign Governments in one and the same Society; and consequently, that either the civil Affairs of every Nation must be under the soveraign Direction of ecclesiastical Presidents, which some contend for; or that the necessary Administration

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and Direction of ecclesiastical Affairs, so far as they are not determined by Divine Authority, must be under the Influence of the civil Power.

Agreeable to this is what our Saviour advances as an universal Proposition: That *a Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*, and that *no Man can serve two Masters*. Supreme or soveraign Power can be but one. To suppose more is plainly destroying the Notion of Soveraignty and introducing Confusion.

So that the Administration and Direction of all Things necessary to the well being of Society, whether of an ecclesiastical or secular Consideration, are necessarily to be under the Direction and Control of one and the same soveraign Power. Nor is it an objection hereto that civil Governors cannot be supposed to understand the Concerns of Religion so well as is necessary to enable them rightly to administer ecclesiastical Affairs; for neither are Princes generally so well acquainted with all the Particulars of the civil or municipal Laws of every Community, as to be able rightly to administer their public civil Interests singly, by their own Skill and Judgment; but the Affairs, belonging both to civil and sacred Administration, are to be debated and settled by Men of Learning and Skill in each Profession, but all under the Authority of one and the same soveraign Power, as before said. And so saith the learned *H. Grotius*, in the Book before cited, Ch. 1. § 3. "Et sane eximi quicquam ab imperio summæ potestatis ratio nulla "patitur." i. e. *No reason can be given for exempting any thing from the Administration of the soveraign Power*. And again, Ch. 3. §. 5. "Nunc qui actus non sunt jure imperabiles summæ inter "Homines potestati videamus. Et constat eos duntaxat extra "imperij jus esse, qui naturali aut alteri cuivis divino juri re-"pugnant." i. e. *Let us now see what Actions come under the command of the supreme Magistrate. And it is plain that those Actions only are not under his Authority to command, which are inconsistent with the Law of Nature, or with some other Law of GOD.* And to the same Purpose I might transcribe almost that whole Book;

Book; which is written purposely in Defence of this Position, That the authoritative Administration of ecclesiastical Polity necessarily appertains to the supreme Power in every State. So that *the civil Authority has a Right to institute whatever the Laws of GOD have not plainly forbidden; or may forbid what the same Laws have not commanded, in pursuance of a sincere Aim at the public Good.* And so saith the holy Scripture, *Rom.* 4. 15, *Where there is no Law there is no Transgression.*

And here I have always taken it to be a certain Rule of Conduct to all Subjects: 'That every Member of a soveraign 'State or civil Society is in Duty bound to Conform to 'every Institution of that State, which is not, or which (after 'a strict and disinterested Examination) does not appear to be 'contrary to some divine Precept.' And under the Influence of the Truth of this Position only, I have endeavoured to vindicate my Conformity to the ecclesiastical Establishment of this Nation, contrary to the Principles of my Education; declaring to the Gentlemen of the Presbyterian Persuasion, and I now repeat the Challenge *in this public Manner* (to borrow an Expression from the Gentleman I am now treating with:) That if they, or any of them will lay their Finger upon any one Action absolutely required from me, as a Lay Communicant with the established Church, which is repugnant to any Law of God, I will be a Dissenter over again.

Hence what the Gentleman, with so remarkable vehemence asserted, in his public Discourse, may probably appear not to be of so much Truth or Importance as he seemed to represent it. For, as to Matter of Doctrine, although nothing inconsistent with any Divine Law can bind the Conscience in Point of Belief or Practice; yet Abstracts and Formularies taken from the holy Scriptures and from the approved Works of ancient or later Writers of Christian Theology, as *Symbols of Faith, Catechisms,* &c. necessary for the Instruction of the Young, and such are not well qualified to learn the necessary Rules of Faith and Practice, by their own Study of the holy Scriptures, and other Writings; these, I say, drawn up by

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Men of approved Abilities, authorised thereto, after necessary Examination of their Agreement with true Doctrine, may be enjoined by the supreme Authority in every Country, as a Means tending to promote true Christianity, and consistent with every Law of God. And every such Injunction hath, from the preceding Considerations, the Force of a Law, upon all the Subjects of every respective State or Community, under the Qualifications before mentioned, so long as it continues unrepealed. But this is not supposed to give such Compositions any divine, perpetual Authority, but that they may be liable to CANDID DISQUISITION, Revisal, Alteration or Correction whensoever it shall appear to the supreme Power conducive to the public Good.

AND, for the same Reason, upon the Reformation in *England*, when there was a Want of Persons duly qualified to compose Discourses for public Instruction, it was very consistent with the Laws of Heaven, that the soveraign Authority should appoint Homilies, or Dissertations on religious Subjects, composed and approved by the Bishops and learned Men of the Church, to be publicly read for the Encrease of Christian Knowledge. And on this Occasion I beg leave to add, that I could wish, (for Reasons I need not mention) there were, at this Time, Collections made of such Discourses as might be of most general Use, as well as of such as are adapted to particular Occasions, from the Works of the many excellent *English* Writers of Theology, more agreeable to the present Conception and Language, than the old Homilies are, and appointed to be read as Prudence should direct, for the same laudable Purpose. This, I believe, might sometimes prevent the ill Effects of the injudicious Choice of Sermons; which, I apprehend, is sometimes made by such as have not sufficient Leisure to compose, or are too modest to trust to their own Compositions; and this, I doubt not, might be lawfully done by the Appointment of the supreme Authority, without interfering with the Laws of Heaven, natural or revealed.

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And, for the like Reason, Forms of public Prayer, &c. may be, and are, very prudently and to very valuable Purposes appointed, by the same Authority, for the Worship of God in all public religious Assemblies: For, as public Prayers, Thanksgivings, &c. cannot well, and certainly ought not to be composed suitable to the great Variety of particular Cases and Circumstances of Individuals, but are to be suited to the Affairs of the People in General, stated Forms appear best adapted to answer the Ends of public Worship; as the People, in general, of all Orders and Capacities may, by constant Attention and frequent Repetition, attain to a competent Understanding of those Forms, and so be able to offer to the Almighty a reasonable Service, much better than they can do by endeavouring to join in new or extemporaneous Compositions, which it is possible may not always be quite correct, either as to Matter or Form, and too often, by Reason of the Length and Intricacy of Sentences, or for Want of proper Connection, or by Reason of scholastic Terms and Notions, above the Comprehension of vulgar Capacities, too often introduced into such Compositions, are not easily intelligible to the common People. And considering the weak Apprehensions of the greatest Part of Mankind, and with how much Difficulty they are brought to understand even common Subjects, when spoke of in a Stile a little elevated above the vulgar Dialect (which those who are ordinarily conversant with People in low Life are better acquainted with, than Men of Learning generally are) I cannot but think it a vast impropriety to expect that Children, Servants and others of low Education, as the Majority of Congregations, for the most Part, are, should be able readily to join in such unpremeditated Addresses, as one may sometimes have heard, if any, except a very few, be qualified to do it. And indeed it is almost unavoidable but that Men of refined Erudition, to whom the Use of learned Terms is very familiar and almost natural, should be apt to deliver their Thoughts, upon any Subject, in a Stile too refined for People of common Education to understand, except

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where they can take time, and will endeavour to consider and think of Terms suitable to lower Capacities, to express them in; which cannot well be the Case in extemporary Compositions for the public Worship of God. I remember to have heard a dissenting Minister of remarkable modesty, many Years ago, declare it was at least one Half of his Work to digest his Conceptions for his public Discourses into such a Stile and Manner of Expression, that they might be intelligible and useful to his Audience. But as extemporary, unpremeditated Prayers or other Compositions cannot have that Advantage, it must happen that, besides other Disadvantages, they will frequently be uttered in Terms, as before said, not intelligible to the greatest Part of ordinary Congregations, and so be of little or no Use to the Ends of public Worship. And here it is worthy of Consideration, that neither the Minister himself, for the most Part, nor any of his People, can possibly have their Minds so constantly and uniformly engaged in this Method of public Address to the Almighty, as they may in customable Forms of Devotion. For if I am to join in an unpremeditated Prayer, or one I am not acquainted with, I must necessarily attend to take in the Whole of every Sentence, before I can understand what every Petition is, which the Minister is putting up; and while the Mind is in this Frame, though the Minister, who has the whole Petition ready formed in his Mind, may be supposed to pray, I, who am attending to what he is pronouncing, cannot with any Propriety, be said to do so, till the Sentence is completed, and then indeed I may, by a quick Turn of Mind, join in the Petition, if it appears proper; but there must always this discriminating Act of the Mind, concerning the Propriety of the Petition, necessarily precede my Concurrence in it. But then I am immediately to intermit my Devotion, and the Address of my Mind to God, that I may attend to take in the next Sentence, which is as yet to me unknown, that when it shall be completed, understood and approved, I may by a Change of mental Action, turn that Sentence also into an Expression of Devotion: And I affirm that I have

known

known where, from the Length and Intricacy of the Sentences, and the Slowness of Pronunciation, I was not able to connect the Ideas, so as to turn the Expressions into religious Address. And this various and desultory Action of the Mind, I think, is quite unavoidable, if one would devoutly join in any extemporary Address, uttered by another Person, to the Almighty. And although some Men perhaps may, from superior Abilities and much practice, have the Matter of the several Parts of their religious Address flow with that Readiness and Ease into their Minds, as not to need great Intenseness of Thought and Study, to be able to fill up the Time destined to that Part of religious Service: I have great Reason to believe these to be very few; and that the greatest Part of those Gentlemen, who appear to pray in the public Assemblies *ex tempore*, either make use of Forms committed to Memory, as I have known some to do, or have such a settled Order of Petitions, *&c.* as comes very near a Form; or else, that their Minds are so much diverted by a necessary Attention to what they are to utter in succession, as very much intermits and disturbs their Devotion; so that while their Minds should be actuated by the Fervour of Devotion in the Pronunciation of one Petition, they are necessarily engaged and diverted by the Consideration and Composition of what is to follow.

But the Matter is vastly otherwise, when public Worship is performed by established Forms: For, by familiar Use, the several Parts flow into the Mind in an easy Succession, and our Devotions are carried on with an uniform Attention, and not broken and interrupted by such various Exercise of Thought, as is unavoidable in the former Case. And I cannot but wonder that our Dissenters in general have so long continued the Practice of extemporary public Devotions, under so manifest Disadvantages; especially after the Publication of what I remember to have read a great many Years ago, in their renowned Mr. Baxter's *Christian Directory*, in favour of established Forms, in his comparative Account of the two Methods of Divine Service.

But besides the very great Advantage of eſtabliſhed Forms of public Devotion before deſcribed, they have another very conſiderable Ground of ſuperior Eſteem, *viz.* That as they are the Work of Men publicly approved, choſen and appointed thereto, and who have Abilities, Leiſure and other Advantages neceſſary to make the Work as complete as poſſible, one may eaſily be perſuaded they will be more correct, as to Order, Pertinence, Grateſulneſs and Propriety, both of Matter and Expreſſion, than extemporary Performances generally can be, and may be ſuited to the Capacities and Abilities of all Sorts of People; ſo that thoſe of the lower Attainments in Erudition, for whom, as being generally the much greater Number, a particular Regard ought to be had in all Things relating to the public Offices of Religion, may be enabled to offer to the Almighty a reaſonable Service; which they very often, for Reaſons above mentioned cannot do, by attending on (for I cannot call it joining in) Modes of Divine Service which they cannot ordinarily underſtand.

And here I think I may, without Scruple affirm, that whoever will impartially and diſintereſtedly attend to and examine the Forms of Worſhip eſtabliſhed in the Church of *England*, will find them compoſed with ſo much Judgment, Caution and Propriety as to be, with a very ſmall Application, eaſily intelligible to the meaneſt Capacities, and at the ſame Time ſo full, proper and expreſſive of the religious Worſhip of Confeſſion, Humiliation, Petition, Praiſe and Thankſgiving, that hardly any thing better can be wiſhed for. If one could deſire any Alterations, it ſhould, in my Opinion, be principally in ſome Forms of occaſional Service; which yet are ſuch as that the Diſſenters generally join in them without Scruple. I cannot omit this Occaſion of expreſſing my very great and ſuperior eſteem of that Part of our Common Prayers called the *Litany, or general Supplication*; which is, I think, every Way the fulleſt and moſt comprehenſive Form of public Addreſs to the Almighty that ever was compoſed, if we except the Lord's Prayer, which is a Part of it; and I believe if the Holy

Spirit

Spirit of the moſt High ever in later Times exerted his peculiar and extraordinary Influence, it was in directing and aſſiſting our pious Reformers in compoſing the Liturgy, and particularly this moſt exalted Part of it. But after all, as we have no Aſſurance of this, if even this whole Liturgy, or any Part of it, ſhould in any future time appear to be improper, or unſuitable in Sentiment or Expreſſion to the particular Circumſtances of the Church and Nation, it may, under the ſupreme Authority be reformed, conſiſtently with the Rules of Chriſtian Doctrine; that is, with the Laws of the Almighty.

As to the external Oeconomy or Government of the Church, by ſeveral Orders of Men, in proper Subordination, as is eſtabliſhed in the Church of *England*, I think it is very plain the ſupreme Authority hath an undoubted Right to interpoſe, and to inſtitute ſuch Order, in this Regard, as ſhall, upon juſt Deliberation, appear moſt conducive to the public Good.

I HAVE ſaid before, which I think will not be diſputed, that the Church, as a human Society, cannot ſubſiſt without ſocial Laws and Government, and theſe Laws muſt be under the Adminiſtration of ſome Perſon or Perſons appointed for that Purpoſe: But there is no Form of external Adminiſtration can be ſaid to be of Divine Inſtitution, or to be of univerſal, permanent and perpetual Uſe and Obligation in the Church of *CHRIST* in all Ages and Nations; but the ſame hath been from the Beginning of the Goſpel liable to, and hath actually undergone a great many Changes, from the different Situation and Circumſtances of the Church, in different Periods of Time.

As an Inſtance hereof, I deſire it may here be noted, that the Order of Deacons (who, from the particular Occaſion and Reaſon of their Inſtitution, ſeem to be ſucceeded in our Times by the Overſeers of the Poor, rather than by that Order of the Clergy who now bear that Name διάκονοι *Miniſtrantes)* was not from the Beginning, but was occaſionally appointed to ſerve a particular Exigence the Church was then under; and was not made univerſal or perpetual by any recorded Order at its

its Institution or afterwards. And it may be noted, that the Apostle St. *Peter*, who seems to have had a principal Hand in that Appointment, does not assume to himself to institute the Order, in consequence of any infallible Judgment or supreme Authority resident or vested in him; nor as being the Will of God, made known to him by any particular Revelation for that purpose; but speaks of it only as a prudential Appointment, suitable and convenient to the then present Circumstances of the Church, οὐκ ἀρεστόν ἐστιν, &c. *It is not proper, not convenient than we should leave the Word of GOD and serve* (διακονεῖν) *at Tables, therefore*, &c. And for the same Reason divers other Usages were afterwards appointed in the Church, according to the different Genius of Times and Places, and in Consequence of different Circumstances, which in later Times were disused and new ones ordained. And it is scarce to be imagined that any one Form of Administration could be made, which might serve the Church in all the different Circumstances it was to be in, in different Times and different Nations. And this seems to be the most probable Reason why we find nothing of this Nature instituted in the Beginning of the Christian Church; whereas, in the Establishment of the *Jewish* Religion, which was to be confined to one Nation, almost every Ceremony of Worship was particularly appointed, even to the Place where they were to throw the Ashes of the Altar, and yet some Things, relating to the Places, Times and Persons, &c. belonging to Religion, afterwards underwent some Alteration, from the Variety of the Circumstances of that Nation. And it is certain, that the Practice of the first and purest Times of the Christian Church, as recorded in Scripture, and in general Scripture Precedents, as such, have not the Force of Laws: For, if so, all such Practices and Precedents would be equally and perpetually binding; which no considerate Person will assert. The early Instances of this Kind prove no more than that such Usages were then lawfull and convenient, and might be so again (but not that they necessarily must be made use of) when the Church should be in the same

Circumstances

Circumſtances, which can only be determined by human Judgment and Diſcretion.

I BEG leave, in further Confirmation of what I am now upon, to mention, and a little to remark upon, a very material and important Apoſtolical Inſtitution. In, or about the eighteenth Year after our Lord's Aſcenſion, the famous Controverſy between the *Jewiſh* and Gentile Converts, concerning the Neceſſity of Circumciſion, and a general Conformity to the Law of *Moſes*, which was then agitated particularly in the Church at *Antioch*, was, by mutual Conſent, referred to the final Deciſion of the APOSTLES AND ELDERS at *Jeruſalem*; whoſe Determination was given in a very ſolemn and extraordinary Manner: Act. 15. 28. *It ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt and to us to lay upon you no greater Burthen than theſe neceſſary Things*, &c. This now, if ever any Thing of the Kind, ſeems to have had all the neceſſary Qualifications of a Divine, authoritative, univerſal and perpetual Inſtitution. It was the Edict of the Council of the Apoſtles and Elders aſſembled at *Jeruſalem*, which then was, if any ever was, the Mother and Miſtreſs of all Churches; (her pretended Daughter and Succeſſor at *Rome* not being then exiſtent). It was by them declared to be made by the particular Appointment and Direction of the Holy Ghoſt and themſelves; and yet ſure it is, that ſuch of the Things, enjoined by this ſolemn Decree, as were not of natural and eternal Obligation, were in following Time, when the particular Reaſon of their Inſtitution no longer exiſted, generally diſuſed: This ſhews that theſe Things were (with all this Solemnity) Inſtituted only *pro tempore*, and to anſwer the Exigence of the Circumſtances the Church was then in. And if this ſo ſolemn an Edict is not, by any remarkable Part of the Chriſtian Church at this Day, looked upon to be obligatory, as to theſe Particulars, how can we fix the Character of an univerſal and perpetual Law upon any other occaſional or prudential Practice or Inſtitution, even of the earlieſt and pureſt Times of the PRIMITIVE CHURCH?

THIS Conſideration, I think, makes it undeniably evident that, in all Ages, the Church in different Nations and different Geniuſſes

Geniusses of Government and Policy may (or rather must) be differently administred, consistently with the perpetual Preservation of the Unity of the Christian Faith; that no one Form of Church Government or Policy is of divine Institution; but that this, as well as other Things of a public Nature appertaining to the Good of the whole Community, is to be determined by the Advice and Consultation of Men properly qualified and appointed, but under the sole Authority of the supreme civil Power. In confirmation of this *Hugo Grotius*, in the Book before quoted, writes thus; "Summæ "Potestatis Imperium dicimus non ad profana tantum sed ad "sacra quoque extendi." i. e. *We say that the Authority of the Soveraign Power extends not only to profane* (common or civil) *Affairs, but to sacred also.* This he proves by many unanswerable Arguments, and adds what I recited before: "Et sane eximi quicquam ab Imperio summæ Potestatis Ratio "nulla patitur." i. e. *No reason can be given for exempting any Thing from the Authority of the supreme Power.* This He afterwards elucidates thus: "Duo sunt genera actuum Imperij "quæ ad jus Imperantis non pertinent, *viz.* Deo vetita jubere, "& Deo jussa vetare." i. e. *There are two Kinds of imperial Acts, which do not appertain to the governing Power,* viz. *to command what GOD hath forbidden; and to forbid what GOD hath commanded.* And a little further on he adds: "Obligant "humana Imperia ad omnia que injusta non sunt." i. e. *Human Soveraignties oblige to all Things which are not unjust.* Which is the same we have before asserted; so that it is hence clear, as before laid down, that all Things which belong to the external Administration of the Church of *CHRIST*, that is, *the Direction of such Things as necessarily belong to* AFFAIRS OF RELIGION, *and are not established by Divine Authority, are properly to be under the Order and Control of the soveraign Power,* in every Country, where the true Religion is established.

THE same Thing is also plainly asserted and proved, by the celebrated Writer and renowned Statesman, Chancellor *Puffendorf*;

dorff; and particularly in his *Introduction to the History of* EUROPE, ch. 12, where he asks this Question: "Whether, "according to the Doctrine of the Christian Religion, it be "absolutely requisite that the outward Direction or Govern-"ment of the same be committed to others, besides Him who "hath the supreme, civil Power in a State? Or, which is "much the same, Whether, according to the Christian Doc-"trine, it be necessary that the outward Government of it be "lodged with the whole Body of the Clergy, or one in "particular, independent of the supreme Magistrate?" And, in answer he says, that "This Question may be considered in "three several Lights. (1.) Whether this necessarily arise from "the Nature of Religion in General, or (2.) whether from "the Genius of the Christian Religion in particular: Or (3.) "Whether it be required by divine Institution? That it "should be in the first Way, I am," saith he, "no Ways able "to find out. For Reason doth not tell me, that if I intend "to serve God I must of necessity make a Division in the "State, and thereby introduce two different Powers, inde-"pendent of one another. On the other Hand, it is no Ways "contrary to Reason to serve GOD, and at the same time to "leave the supreme Direction of the outward Matters, be-"longing to divine Service, to those who have the supreme "Power in the State." And a little further on he adds: "It cannot be denied, that as every one is bound by Nature "to SERVE GOD; so also is it at the same Time in his Power "to perform the outward Ceremonies of Religion in such a "Manner as he believes most pleasing to GOD." This natural Right of every one to judge of and choose the Manner of his paying his Homage to the most High, is what I have often heard alledged by the Dissenters as the most indubitable and UNALTERABLE Right of every Man. Whereas, as I have before proved, this is one of those Things which is not determined by any natural or revealed Law, which the Almighty hath given to Mankind; and, consequently, whenever it comes to have, or to appear to have a necessary Ingrediency in the

public Advantage of Societies, it neceſſarily (like other Things originally indifferent) comes under the Determination of the ſupreme Power. Every Man has, by Nature, a Right to build his Houſe or encloſe his Ground in ſuch a Manner as he thinks fit (not injuring others;) yet no one queſtions but, for public Utility or Convenience, he may be obliged, by the civil Government, to build in a particular Form, and to cut his Hedges to a determinate Height, *&c.* And ſo proceeds the laſt mention'd great Writer, thus: "After that civil Societies "were inſtituted, that ſame Power (of determining what Ce-"remonies of Religious Service ſhall be deemed moſt plea-"ſing to God) is thereby devolved upon thoſe who have "the ſupreme Adminiſtration of Affairs in a Society." And again: "The moſt ancient Fathers, who did not live under "any regular Government, exerciſed this Power in their "Families: But, when civil Societies were inſtituted, the "ſame Power was transferr'd to the Heads of thoſe Societies; "and that for the Reaſon alledged before, *viz.* For avoiding "the ſetting up two independent Soveraignties in the ſame "State." And

(2.) He ſays, "Neither can any Reaſon be alledged "why the Chriſtian Religion in particular ſhould imply a "Neceſſity, that the above mentioned Direction ſhould be "committed to any other than the ſupreme Magiſtrate." And

(3.) "Whether there be ſuch a Command in the Holy "Scriptures, which forbids Soveraigns to intermeddle with "this Direction, and aſſigns the ſame to others, in the higheſt "Degree of Soveraignty, thoſe are obliged to prove, who "endeavour to maintain this Aſſertion." And I add, they will find it a very difficult, or rather impoſſible Undertaking.

This great Writer, for further Elucidation ſaith, that "Becauſe the ſecular Soveraigns, at the firſt Eſtabliſhment "of the Chriſtian Religion, did not concern themſelves for "its Welfare, the Chriſtians did, without their Direction, "contrive for the Support of their Religion as well as they "could; But," he ſays, "it is a Miſtake to infer from

"thence

" thence, that in Christian Countries the outward Govern-
" ment of Religion does not (as other Things of common
" Concern) belong to the Administration of the supreme
" civil Power."

And, as a Conclusion of this Argument, which he handles pretty fully, he says: " From what hath been said, this " Conclusion may be made" (agreeable to what I laid down before) " That the Practice of the primitive Church, as to this " Point of outward Church Government, is not to be made a " perpetual and universal Rule in a State, which is under the " Jurisdiction of an orthodox Christian Magistrate." And I add, if the Magistrate be accused of not being orthodox in his Administration, it belongs to those who alledge this as a Reason for their Non-compliance with his Regulations, to shew their Inconsistence with some Divine Law. That is, as *Grotius* writes as before cited; that he doth either " Jussa " Dei vetare, *or* Deo vetita jubere:" i. e. *Either forbid some-* " *thing which GOD hath commanded, or command something which He hath forbidden.*

This learned Author, it must be owned, maintains this Argument particularly in Opposition to the popish tyrannical Usurpation; but the Proofs clearly arise from, and are built upon universal Principles, and should be of the greater Weight, especially with Protestants, as the same Author shews that popish Tyranny is entirely established upon this absurd Supposition of the Ecclesiastical Administration being Soveraign, and independent on the civil Government. What he says is visibly true, and should therefore be allowed its full Weight with all who profess to Protest against the Imposition and Tyranny of the Church of *Rome.*

The very great and learned *Calvin* maintains the same Thing; whose Arguments I have not room here to transcribe. Whoever hath a Mind may find them in the three or four first Chapters of his fourth Book of Institutions; where he largely insists, that no Pretence of greater Purity of Administration, superior Edification, or any other of the Arguments usually

alledged in Vindication of Non-conformity are ſufficient to juſtify a Diſſent or Separation from the Church eſtabliſhed, " where the Word of God is truly preached, and the Sa- " craments duly adminiſtred.

Our learned *Hooker*, in his *Eccleſiaſtical Polity*, ſays much the ſame Thing; declaring againſt the Suppoſition of the particular Divine Authority of any one Scheme of Eccleſiaſtical Polity or Adminiſtration; and aſſerting that all of that Kind ariſes only from the general Obligation we are under, from Nature and Revelation, to be obedient to the Laws of thoſe Societies to which we belong.

Hence we may, with Sorrow, reflect upon the Impropriety, Unreaſonableneſs and Folly of thoſe many Debates which diſtracted this Church and Nation ſince the Reformation, and more particularly ſince the Reſtoration, to the Diverſion of that religious Zeal, whoſe ſole Object ſhould have been the Cultivation and Eſtabliſhment of true Chriſtianity in Faith and Practice, after Times of ſo much Wickedneſs and Confuſion, to furious and fruitleſs Quarrels about a meer Chimæra, an *Ens Rationis*, a Nullity——the Divine Authority of this or that Mode of Eccleſiaſtical Order and Adminiſtration. It is very plain, from what we have here noted, that both Sides were very zealouſly arguing themſelves into the Poſſeſſion of what neither had the leaſt Shadow of original Claim to, and what had really no Exiſtence.

As the Chriſtian Religion was to be the Religion of Mankind, and conſequently was to be eſtabliſhed in Ages and Nations very different in Exiſtence and Circumſtances, the external Form of the Adminiſtration of Churches (which hath apparently not a great deal to do with true Chriſtianity) was left by the great Redeemer undetermined. And ſure it is, that wherever a due Regard is had to the Eſſentials and Vitals of Chriſtianity, a pure and unfeigned Faith, with univerſal Holineſs of Life, in Humility, Sincerity, Piety and Charity, it could be no difficult Matter to inſtitute a Form of external Oeconomy, conſiſtent with and promotive of the general Ends

of

of Christianity, and suited to the particular Circumstances of every Age and Nation.

I FREELY own, that although I believe the Establishment of our Church to be the Best that ever was in any Nation, since our Saviour's Time, for obtaining the Ends of Christianity, which the Passions and Vices of Men are apt to deprave, yet I don't see but that other Forms of Oeconomy, particularly the Presbyterianism of *Scotland*, might, amongst a People generally under the Influence of the Virtues before mentioned, pretty well answer the same Ends.

IT is very plain, that the Christian Religion, added to the Light of natural Reason, appoints the Almighty to be worshiped in Spirit and in Truth; but has no where appointed the particular Modes and Ceremonies of that Worship. The Institution of Churches, as such, is chiefly to regulate these; and the different Apprehensions of Men, too much under the Influence of Ignorance, Pride and Avarice, have been the Occasion of great and mischievous Quarrels and Disputes upon this Subject, which, by a disinterested Attention to public Utility, might have been, without much Difficulty, avoided or remedied. For Instance: Of what great Moment is it whether those, who by Office preside in Religious Assemblies, appear in their Office clad in white, or black, or red, or any other Colour, or whether their Vestments be of this or that Cut or Shape? And as there is no original Excellence or Virtue in any one of these Differences, what can hinder but that the supreme civil Magistrate or Magistracy, whose Office it is to regulate Things of an indifferent Nature, for the Peace and Convenience of the Public, may, by his Authority, ordain that which, on Consideration and Advice, shall be judged best, to be of general Use? And, in particular may appoint that he who reads the public Service shou'd be vested in white, and he who stands to instruct the People appear in black, without ascribing any Sanctity or Divine Authority to either, and without believing that the Prayers or Instructions receive any efficacy from the different Habit of the Minister. But, as the

Weakness

Weakneſs of many People is prone to imagine Excellencies in meer Diſtinctions, it is neceſſary to prevent the ill Conſequence which might ſpring from ſuch Weakneſs, by fixing all ſuch Ceremonies.

Supposing the People in General acquainted with the proper Import of all, or the greateſt Part of the Words in any vulgar Language; tho' on ſome Accounts, before mentioned, ſet Forms for public Prayers would ſtill be much more eligible; yet Prayers compoſed with a perpetual Variety of Expreſſion might, perhaps, pretty well anſwer the Ends of Liturgy (as ſome Miniſters of the Eſtabliſhment chooſe to cloſe their Sermon with a ſuitable Prayer of their own Compoſition,) eſpecially if one could any how obtain a previous Aſſurance there ſhou'd not, from Ignorance or Pride, Whim or Obſtinancy, be any Mixture of Things improper to be offered in Devotion to the moſt High. But, as Experience proves, that on this Account People are apt to divide into Factions, I think, for the Ends of Unity and Order, as well as for other Reaſons before hinted, eſtabliſhed Forms of Devotion are very prudently appointed for public Worſhip.

If all in holy Orders were as well ſecured from Error, and as much of one Heart and one Mind as the Apoſtles and Presbyters in the primitive Church were, there would be no great Hazard from a Parity of Influence and Authority amongſt Miniſters. But, as Ignorance, Error and ſiniſter Views are Ingredient in too many particular Characters, it ſeems quite neceſſary the Church ſhou'd be, as much as poſſible, ſecured from the ill Effects of ſuch Depravity, by the Eſtabliſhment of a proper Subordination, that the Conduct and particular Actions of all may be ultimately liable to the Review, Cenſure and Animadverſions of a Few of diſtinguiſhed Excellence in the Church. And I cannot but think that the more it ſhall pleaſe the Almighty, who hath the Spirits of all *under his Rule and Governance*, to diſpoſe and turn the Hearts of the great Men, in Church and State, ſo to ſettle the Diſpenſation of the public Favours, Rewards and Emoluments, for the Encouragement,

ment of diſtinguiſhed Learning, Virtue and Piety, as may beſt promote a general Emulation with Reſpect to thoſe Qualifications, which are of the greateſt Importance, and moſt eſſentially neceſſary for the Edification of the Church in Faith and every Chriſtian Grace, the eaſier and more Obvious will the Settlement of the external Oeconomy of the Church always be. And, I am perſuaded, that upon the general Prevalence of ſuch a Diſpoſition, our preſent Eſtabliſhment would be troubled with very few Diſſenters: And though there will always be room, and ſhould always be Encouragement for CANDID DISQUISITIONS and Improvements, to which all human Compoſitions always were, and always will be liable; yet a very few, with Reſpect to our Liturgy and Eccleſiaſtical Eſtabliſhment, would, I am convinced, be found neceſſary. And I cannot imagine what Objection, in Reaſon or Religion, can be made againſt ſuch prudential Alterations as may at any Time appear neceſſary or advantageous, being confirmed and made public by the Authority of the ſupreme Power in every State.

AND here I cannot but think, that although a Toleration, that is, an Exemption from Puniſhment (for ſuch as may poſſibly think an Obedience to any public Inſtitution inconſiſtent with their Duty to the moſt High, from any Law or Interpretation of any Law they are, or may apprehend themſelves to be under) be quite Agreeable to the Genius and Spirit of Chriſtianity; yet that this Toleration can by no Means excuſe or leſſen the Obligation of any to Conformity with all public Inſtitutions, *where no reaſonable Ground for Scruple* can be ſhewn. And that every one who hath a Scruple ought, with a Calmneſs and Humility ſuitable to the Spirit of the Goſpel, to declare ſuch Scruple, and endeavour to obtain Satisfaction. For as the Chriſtian Religion enjoins every one of its Votaries to be always ready to give a Reaſon (ἕτοιμοι πρὸς ἀπολογίαν) of the Hope that is in him, with Meakneſs and Fear; ſo if Perſons, with the ſame *Meekneſs and Fear* would propoſe their Scruples, with a real Deſire of Satisfaction, we ſhould,

ſhould, I verily believe, have very few *reaſoning* Diſſenters. And I am firmly perſuaded, that where one Diſſents from a real invincible Scruple, touching the lawfulneſs of any enjoined Terms of Communion, Hundreds do it from Reaſons *(or Cauſes)* not near ſo juſtifiable: Perhaps ſome may do it from an obſtinate, undebated Prejudice, or from Intereſt, or from a Deſire of becoming of more Importance by being Members of a ſmaller Society, than their Characters or Circumſtances will allow them to be of amongſt the Body of Citizens, or even from a Spirit of Oppoſition, or of Cenſoriouſneſs. As this laſt, I have Reaſon to apprehend, has too much Influence, even with ſome who are not ſufficiently aware of the Motive, I beg leave to ſay a little more upon it, and to ſhew how bad a Reaſon it is for making a Breach, Diviſion or Hereſy (αἵρεσιν) in the Church.

THE Duties of religious Worſhip, whether of the Cloſet, Family, or Church, as they have a more immediate Relation to GOD as their principal Object and End, have in all Ages been conſidered by a great Part of Mankind as being of a higher Value, importance and Merit than the Duties of Morality, notwithſtanding the Almighty hath, both from the Nature of Things and the Light of Revelation, made the Contrary evident, and that the poſitive Inſtitutions of Religion are only ſo far ſerviceable and to be eſteemed, as they procure a greater Regard to be paid to the eternal Obligations of Morality. *Unto the Wicked GOD ſaith, What haſt thou to do to declare my Statutes, or that thou ſhouldeſt take my Covenant in thy Mouth*, Pſ. 50. 16. And *Iſ.* 1. 11,——15, *To what Purpoſe is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto me, ſaith the Lord. I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks*, &c. *Your new Moons and your appointed Feaſts my Soul hateth*, &c. And at the 16 Verſe he tells what it is he requireth. *Waſh you, make you clean; put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes: Ceaſe to do Evil, learn to do well, &c.* And the ſame is moſt elegantly explained by the Prophet *Micah*, ch. 6. 6, 7, 8. Yet, I ſay, tho' this is ſo plain, it has been a prevalent

lent Error, amongst the greater Part of Mankind, to put a superior Value upon the Punctuality of religious Performances, to the most conscientious Regard to Righteousness, Truth and Charity: And these gloomy Saints have affected, in many Times and Places, to separate themselves from the Rest of Mankind into exclusive Societies, as those mentioned in the Beginning of the 65th Chapter of *Isaiah*; who attending upon many superstitious Rites, under the Notion of religious Improvements, did, for that Reason, treat others, who were content to be found in the plain Paths of Righteousness and the established Religion, with a *Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou.* And our Saviour represents the Scribes and Pharisees as under the Influence of the same Sentiments. A conscientious Regard to the Offices of Religion, as appointed by God, is certainly a very essential Part of human Duty and Obligation, as the same arises from the Laws of Nature, and is one, and a very principal Part of the eternal Obligations of Morality, as it hath a natural Tendency to enforce the Consideration of the Divine Authority for the Practice of universal Virtue; which is the highest Improvement of human Nature: But wherever the Duties of Religion are separated from this Consideration, and looked upon as original Excellencies and Qualifications for the Divine Favour, superior to moral Purity, substituting the Means for the End, they then become odious to God and good Men; and such Distinctions are a very poor Pretence of Reason for Separation from the established Church.

This is what not many, *even of the Saints*, care publicly to deny; but yet, the superior Regard paid to a scrupulous Observance and Performance of Religious Duties, and the great Account generally made of particular Persons who are famous this Way, without any Pretensions to a distinguished excellence in regard of Truth and Righteousness, Humility and Charity, gives one a strong Reason to believe there is a false and superstitious Regard paid to such observances. And I think it very plain that some, who distinguish themselves this Way, are habitually under a Persuasion that these religious Performances are even sufficient to atone

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for Actions not quite consistent with moral Righteousness, which they visibly indulge, straining and wire-drawing the Laws of Justice and Equity to patronize palpable Iniquity; and that a scrupulous tithing of *Mint*, *Anise and Cummin* will atone for the Neglect of *Judgment*, *Mercy and Fidelity*. But this is a Subject not to be prosecuted too particularly, *especially in this Place.*

THERE are, I know, some Reasons urged in Vindication of Non-conformity, grounded on what affects only the Ministers of that Interest and Communion, which might perhaps appear worthy of some consideration, upon Supposition that any thing of general Concern in the established Church had been, or could be, proved to be inconsistent with the Will of GOD, made known to Mankind, either by the Light of Nature, or by positive Revelation or Institution: But as we have before shewn that there is nothing in the Christian Religion to be pleaded in barr of the Right of the supreme civil Power's appointing, for the external Government of the Christian Church in every Nation, what shall, upon mature Deliberation, appear most conducive to the general Ends of public religious Worship, or to the particular Design of the Christian Constitution; and as we have, I hope unexceptionably, proved, that in the Constitution and Government of the Church of *England* there is no such Inconsistency, but that all her Institutions have so direct a tendency to promote and preserve Peace and Unity, Order and Decency, Holiness and Piety, agreeable to the Spirit and Precepts of the Gospel; that hardly any Alteration can reasonably be wished for, nothing being required from the People in general, which can be charged with the least Appearance of Inconsistency with any Law of GOD; and as we have still further made it manifest, that the ecclesiastical Institutions of this Nation are much better adapted to answer the Ends of public Religious Worship, than the loose, undetermined Methods used in the religious Assemblies of the Dissenters; it necessarily follows that there is no Necessity of those separate Churches, and, consequently, any personal Difficulties those Gentlemen, who

who are Miniſters of ſuch ſeparate Communions, may apprehend themſelves to be under, cannot reaſonably appear worthy of much diſtinct Conſideration in this Place, it being clear from the Premiſes, that it can be but of very ſmall Importance to the public Utility, that there ſhould be a Diſſenting Miniſter at all. Miniſters, under the Character here ſpoken of, are meerly for the Service of Churches, to preſide in their public Offices of Religion: But if there be no ſolid Reaſon for any Neceſſity of ſuch ſeparate Diſſenting Churches, as we have I think clearly evinced, their Miniſters become equally unneceſſary, and conſequently their Complaints of very little Importance.

It is certainly quite agreeable to human Prudence, that no one be admitted a Member of any Society, without a previous Aſſurance of the Agreeableneſs of his Principles and Apprehenſions with the eſtabliſhed Laws of the Society: And eſpecially it is neceſſary that ſuch as are to bear a principal Part in the Adminiſtration of the public Affairs thereof, ſhould give ſuch Aſſurance of the Agreeableneſs of their Apprehenſions, as well as of their Fidelity in Diſcharge of ſuch public Offices as they ſhall be admitted to. And if any thing in the Aſſurance required be complained of as diſagreeable to the Apprehenſions of the Perſon deſiring to be ſo admitted, he hath an eaſy Remedy at Hand; and there is no Need the Society ſhould recede from her eſtabliſhed Rules, in Complaiſance to ſuch Complaints, while there is no Want of Perſons ſufficiently Qualified to fill and diſcharge ſuch Offices, without any troubleſome Remonſtrances about the Terms of Admittance.

But, as we have before obſerved, that all human Inſtitutions are liable to Incorrectneſs, and may require Alteration and Improvement; if it ſhall at any Time be publicly made appear, that there is any Thing required in ſuch Admiſſions which is inconſiſtent with the Laws of Truth and Righteousness, as the Diſſenters complain, I hope ſuch Regulation will be made as may convince the World that thoſe who are intruſted with the Adminiſtration of eccleſiaſtical

cleſiaſtical Affairs, are under the ſtrongeſt Influences of Truth and the general Rights of Mankind, and will uſe their honeſt Endeavour that every Thing, in the Collation of both Offices and Rewards, ſhall be adminiſtred ſo as to promote, as much as poſſible, the Intereſts of true Religion, Piety and Learning; that is, ſo as the moſt effectually to cultivate and eſtabliſh THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF A FREE PEOPLE, and particularly the flouriſhing Eſtate of true Chriſtianity, in this Nation: *As hardly any thing can be juſtly eſteemed a greater Blemiſh to any public eccleſiaſtical Eſtabliſhment, than to require any Thing as a Condition of Admittance, of Perſons duly qualified, into ſacred Offices, which is evidently inconſiſtent with thoſe original and fundamental Principles.*

THUS I have written a brief Apology to the Diſſenters for my leaving their Communion; whereof I gave my Father an Abſtract, at his Command, at the Time of my Conformity, and would then have made the ſame Public, had it been required. But as that was not then done, I thought fit to embrace this Opportunity ſo fairly offered me of publiſhing this ſhort (but I hope clear) Explication of the Reaſons which influenced my Conduct.

I HAVE ſhewn that every Member of a public, ſoveraign Society is obliged to conform to the authoritative Inſtitutions of that Society, and that nothing can excuſe that Conformity but a real or apprehended Inconſiſtency of thoſe Inſtitutions with the Laws of GOD. And I hope it will appear that the eccleſiaſtical Conſtitutions of this Realm enjoin nothing to me, a Lay-communicant, which can be charged as being inconſiſtent with any Law of GOD, natural or revealed.

BUT I remember to have had very often inculcated upon me, during my younger Years, this Propoſition, as of undeniable Truth, and of very great Importance: *That nothing ought to be admitted into the Worſhip of GOD, but what hath the Sanction of a poſitive divine Inſtitution.* And I was often put in Mind of the dreadful Declaration of the Al-

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mighty's Displeasure against *Nadab* and *Abihu* for offering *strange Fire before the Lord* (not which he had forbidden, but) *which he had not commanded.* And was made hence to apprehend, that as the Ceremonies of our public Worship have no Pretence to divine Institution, they ought to be considered as Depravations, and even Profanations of that pure, spiritual Worship, which we, as Christians, are to pay to the most High. And that consequently it was an indispensible Duty rather to suffer Persecution for Non-conformity (as many had then lately done, and in particular my very faithful and pious Monitor) than conform to those Injunctions; especially as it was then, as now, almost universally believed amongst the Dissenters, that the civil Power hath no Right to intermeddle with Affairs of Religion. This is placing the Grounds of Non-Conformity in the strongest Light; and I doubt not this Consideration hath had a great Influence upon many others, as it had upon me for many Years. But I apprehend every dispassionate and considerate Reader will find all this awful Representation, with Respect to the Ceremonies and Government of the Church of *England*, quite set aside by the preceding Reasoning.

I BEFORE observed, that the Religion of *Moses* was to be the peculiar Religion of the *Israelitish* Nation, and for that Reason every individual Ceremony was peculiarly enjoined suitably to the Circumstances of a peculiar People: And as there was not a very wide Difference betwixt the Externals of this Scheme, and those of a great many of the *Pagan* Rites; had the People of *Israel* been allowed to make the least Alterations, at their Pleasure, in these Institutions, they might by Degrees have easily sliden into a Conformity with the Religions of the Nations round about them; to which they had a surprising Proneness; and from which it was the declared Intention of the Almighty, for wise Ends of his Council and Providence to restrain them.

BUT this Reason is quite of no Importance in the Christian Religion, which was from the Beginning designed to be the Religion of all Mankind, and therefore not limited to

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any one Set of Mode or external Adminiſtration, which might have been unſuitable to ſome Circumſtance the Church, in various Ages and different Nations might very probably be under: But meerly the eſſentials of the Religion were laid down, as the general unalterable Baſis for every neceſſary eccleſiaſtical Regulation to be built upon, ſuitably to the different eventual Circumſtances of different Ages and Nations. And conſequently the Terror of the Almighty's Judgment upon *Nadab* and *Abihu for offering ſtrange Fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded*, has nothing to do with the Chriſtian Scheme, except with Reſpect to thoſe who go about to make Alterations in the Eſſentials of Chriſtian Doctrine, inſtituted by *CHRIST* and his Apoſtles; and with Regard to ſuch I think that Paſſage of ſacred Hiſtory ought to be conſidered as of very great Moment and Importance.

THERE were in the early and in the latter Ages of Chriſtianity ſundry Obſervations, ſuitable to the different Circumſtances of the Church, univerſally practiſed, without the leaſt Scruple, for which none could pretend the Authority of a divine Inſtitution.

THE Chriſtian Sabbath is ſuch a one, which hath in all Ages of Chriſtianity been obſerved as ſacred to the public Worſhip of GOD; yet is no where appointed in the New Teſtament, nor is eſtabliſhed upon any Authority, but primitive Practice, which we have ſhewn not to have the Force of a Law.

EVEN the building of Churches for the uſe of religious Aſſemblies had no divine Authority under the Goſpel, the Diſciples being wont in the moſt primitive Times to aſſemble in private Houſes; nor are there many Inſtances recorded of building Churches, before the Days of *Conſtantine* the Great. Yet we find that religious Emperor made no Scruple of Erecting pompous Edifices, nor the Chriſtians of uſing them for that Purpoſe.

THE Baptiſm of Infants, though no where appointed in the New Teſtament, yet has been generally practiſed, from the early Ages, without Scruple, as being agreeable to the Reaſon

Reason of the Institution of that Rite; and those few who in latter Times have made a Scruple and Schism on that Account, allege principally in their Vindication the Want of such Institution, and yet, in other particulars make shift without it; and they cannot deny but that Christian Infants are as capable of becoming Parties in the Christian Covenant, and receiving the Benefits thereof, as those of *Israel* were, with Respect to their religious National Covenant, into which they were expresly admitted. See *Deut.* 29. 11, 12.

It only remains that I add in this Place a few Words, in respect to the Book herewith published, and that principally in excuse of such Blemishes and Imperfections as may appear in the Performance.

I have, in this Preface shewn the Occasion of the Work, which I hope will appear, to all candid and disinterested Readers, to have been just, and that the Book is honestly design'd as a Vindication of the fundamental Doctrines of the Gospel of *CHRIST*, from the perverse Interpretations of such as choose to confine their Belief to such Things only in Religion as easily come, or can be clearly brought quite within the Comprehension of Human Reason. I thought the Idea which hath in all Ages of Christianity generally obtained, concerning the Doctrines of *Redemption*, *Atonement*, *&c.* by the Death of *CHRIST*, though not quite obvious to human Reason, might be fairly asserted and vindicated from the original and natural Meaning of those Terms in the *Hebrew* of the Old Testament (wherewith I had endeavoured to obtain as extensive an Acqnaintance as I could) compared with their Translation in the *Greek* (called) the Version of the Septuagint, and applied to the Doctrine of Christianity in the New Testament.

I hope the Work will appear, in the Main, pretty well executed, to answer the Design it was honestly intended for; but I am aware, upon Revisal, that there are some Imperfections, Improprieties of Expression, Repetitions, *&c.* which the Attentive will easily discover, and for which I think it my

Duty

Duty to make as good an Apology as the Case will truly bear. I beg leave therefore to inform the Reader, that not having the Opportunity of a Printing-Office furnished with *Hebrew* and *Greek* Types, and Workmen scient of their Management, so that I might have it printed under my own Correction; and not choosing to have it done at a Distance, for fear of a Want of proper Care in the Printing and Correction of the many *Hebrew* and *Greek* Quotations it contains, I was forced, as well as I could, to print it at my own Press, and compose it with my own Hand; not being able in this Place to get a Journeyman capable of doing it. And having writ the Copy only in Short-hand, in the Composition for the Press many Things occurred, which appeared proper to be added, altered, enlarged, contracted or differently disposed or expressed. By which means it will easily be conceived a good many Incorrectnesses and Improprieties, as before said, might proceed, and have proceeded; whereof I beg the Reader will allow as favourable a Censure as possible.

THE many Blemishes and Imperfections in the Printing must be imputed to the Necessity I was under of printing the first and second Sections with my own Hand (a Practice I was very much a Stranger to) and to my Want of a better Furniture of Types, for Elegance, Propriety and Ornament of the Work,

THESE Hints, I hope, will by the candid Reader be accepted, and for those of another Character, I must bear their Censure.

I WISH my Attempt at this Method of Vindication of the Christian Doctrine may incite some of greater Ability and Leisure, and whose Character in Life better comports with such Undertakings, than my Occupation and Engagements allow mine to do, to perform it in a better Manner.

IF this shall happily be the Case, I shall rejoice to see my own Attempt rendred useless by the superior Excellence of such other Performance; being only desirous that the Truth of GOD may prevail against the Ignorance, Perverseness, Pride and Obstinacy of Men.

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